

Introduction

This leaflet will help you search for good quality health information on the internet.

It will:

- Help you to assess information you find on the internet.
- Give you details of quality websites about general health

During your treatment journey you will have been given information from your health care professionals. You can then choose to add to the information you have already been given and research health related issues for yourself. The internet is a wonderful resource but not everything found on it is trustworthy, accurate, reliable or up to date. So how can you decide what to trust?

First of all it is important to be aware that:

- Anyone can publish anything on the internet.
- There are no quality controls on the internet.
- The information you find maybe out of date.

If you do not have a computer or mobile device you can use your local public library. If you take this booklet with you, they can help you access the websites listed.

What information can I trust about my condition on the internet?

Quality Standards

- There are two quality standards found on health websites which are a clear indication that the information they contain should be trustworthy.
- Many good sites do not have these but these standards are one way for you to judge the reliability of a website. These are:

The Information Standard

- This is an independent certification programme commissioned by NHS England. It is awarded to organisations producing clear, accurate, up to date, evidenced health information.
- For more information about the scheme and a list of those organisations who have been awarded a certificate see: <http://www.england.nhs.uk/tis/>

Health on the Net Foundation

- HON Code of conduct is world wide standard given to websites that provide reliable online health information. Please note that some websites use this logo even if they have not been certified. To check authenticity click on the HON logo. This should take you to a page with a “HON” code number—www.healthonnet.org/pat.html.



How do I assess the quality of a website?

When you are looking at a website, remember the **5Ws**.

1) Who is the author/publisher of a website?

Websites should have an “About us” link and this should clearly state who wrote it. Are they fair in what they say? What are their reasons for publishing, for example, are they trying to give you information or sell you something? Do other websites link to them?

2) Who was it written for?

The information on some websites is aimed at health professionals, so relies on the viewer having high level medical knowledge. It is best to find websites which are written for patients or the general public as medical terms will be explained.

3) When was it written?

A good website will tell you when the information was last updated. If it is not recent or there is no date then the information may be out of date.

Look at the last updated information (usually at the bottom of the web page). This will tell you when the information was added. Look for references or links to the evidence. If the site has links which do not work, this suggest that the website is not being kept up-to-date.

4) Where does the information come from?

If the website refers to other sources of information, this shows that the information provided is not just the author's opinion, but is also shared by other professionals.

5) Where was the information published?

- What part of the world is the website coming from? Statistics and treatment information may not be relevant to the United Kingdom.
- Look at the web address information as this will often indicate the country of origin and type of organisation. The URL (uniform resource locator) will also give clues. See below for examples:

.au = Australia

.ca = Canada

.de = Germany

.com or .org = an organisation

.ac = an educational site

.gov = a government site



Recommended websites for general health information

NHS Choices

This site is funded by the Department of Health. It is committed to providing trustworthy information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare. NHS Choices ensures its content is evidence-based and includes the best scientific knowledge available. It is accredited by The Information Standard—<http://www.nhs.uk/>

Behind the headlines

This is part of NHS Choices—it explains the facts behind health stories in the media—<https://www.nhs.uk/news/>

Patient.Info

Patient.Info is the UK's leading independent health site, established for over 15 years. With more than 8 million visits a month, it is a trusted source of information for both patients and health professionals nationwide. The site contains over 4000 health information leaflets, a wellbeing centre, a free health check, and thousands of discussion forums. It is accredited by The Information Standard and HON—<http://www.patient.info/>

Staying safe online

www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/digital-inclusion/Pages/get-online-take-control-of-your-health.aspx

MedlinePlus Guide to Healthy Web Surfing

<https://medlineplus.gov/healthywebsurfing.html>

Finding Good Quality Health Information on the Internet

Health Information Websites



Contact details

Library and eLearning Services
Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust
QuAD Centre
02392286039

